

Holiday let grandparents lose fight to keep welcoming guests

A bid by grandparents to rent their listed flat two months a year to holiday guests in an East Lothian village has been rejected by councillors.

Amanda White was refused a change of use for her ground floor flat in East Linton's village square, to allow it to be used as an Airbnb because it shares a communal staircase with other residential properties in the Category B listed building.

In a statement she said she and her partner bought the flat 14 years ago to be close to grandchildren and family and only rented it out through the holiday let platform for 59 days a year.

Planning officers refused to allow the change of use after ruling the communal entrance made it "incompatible with and harmful to the amenity of the occupants of other flatted properties used as residential dwellings within the building."

But at a meeting of East Lothian Council's Local Review Body members were divided over the impact of the use which was described as home letting on other residents.

Councillor Norman Hampshire told the meeting that while there had been no objections from neighbours or complaints about

previous use of the flat that did not mean there would not be problems in the future.

He said: "When somebody buys a property in a stairwell, they have a shared area and they have to live with their neighbours in that stairwell. When you introduce a short term let you have different people coming in every week.

"For a lot of people it would not matter, they may enjoy meeting different people but you can have situations where you could have a young single woman or young children from whom meeting strangers in that enclosed area can be really intimidating."

Councillor John McMillan, who told the meeting short term holiday lets were his preferred accommodation while on holiday, said in this case the "disbenefits outweigh the benefits".

He said: "I think it is important that we encourage tourism and there is a need for this type of accommodation. If I am honest it is my preferred holiday. My main holiday is taking a short term holiday let.

"But I think there are risks to the character and sense of place in what is a beautiful corner in East Linton. We can't predict the future but the purpose of planning is to try and ensure the best outcome and for me allowing a home let/short term holiday let, would be detrimental to the overall amenity and character of the place."

However fellow review body member Councillor Jeremy Findlay argued planning decisions could not be made on future problems which may not happen.

He added: "We haven't had any complaints from neighbours and there is no evidence of loss of amenity.

"There is a huge demand for short term lets, there are a lot

of hotels in East Lothian and a lot of them are very expensive. Not everyone can afford to go into hotels and an Airbnb type residents are a very important part of the tourism make up in East Lothian.”

The review body was split with councillors Hampshire and McMillan voting to refuse the appeal and councillors Findlay and Liz Allan supporting it. Councillor Hampshire had the casting vote and the appeal was rejected.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter