

Jewellery store owner 'uncomfortable' with holiday let guests

A jewellery shop owner who claimed allowing a neighbouring flat to operate as a holiday let could put her business at risk was accused of 'discrimination' by the property owner.

Claire Blatherwick told a meeting of East Lothian Council's licensing sub-committee she felt a lot of "discomfort" about a string on unknown guests staying in the flat, which has a shared courtyard.

But while she appealed to councillors to reject the application by flat owner Gavin Cave for a licence to operate the short term holiday let, Mr Cave said she had no legitimate grounds.

And he told the meeting it was 'discrimination' to suggest his type of guests were more likely to be involved in crime.

He said: "It is a discriminatory assumption against short term tenant that they are more likely to commit crimes.

"In fact if the flat could not be let it would be empty for long periods of time leaving it unused with no lights on."

Ms Blatherwick told the committee she did not intend to discriminate but had taken on the shop in the belief the flat

was a long term residential home.

She said: "Unfortunately many people in my industry have had unpleasant experiences and we are extremely cautious about where we are and our movements.

"It is much more comfortable as a jeweller to know our neighbours, it is not meant to be discriminatory."

The committee heard the holiday flat, on Station Hill shared a courtyard with other properties including the new jewellery business.

Mr Cave told the committee: "This is a situation that is not uncommon across Scotland with tenement buildings like this. It is not grounds to refuse a licence for the holiday let."

The flat owner also told the committee no holiday guest would be able to access the courtyard during their stays and a local management company would oversee it.

Prior to the meeting large parts of the publicly available submissions from both the applicant and the objector, including photographs of the buildings involved, were redacted by council officers.

The committee unanimously supported the short term holiday let licence.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter