

Objectors anger as hearing over church wedding venue is deferred

Angry objectors confronted councillors after they delayed a decision over a church being used as a wedding venue at the request of the applicant.

Nearly a dozen local residents attended the meeting of Midlothian Council's Local Review Body in its chambers this morning where the application for West Church, in Dalkeith, was due to be heard.

But they were left frustrated after officers told the meeting a decision had been taken to delay making a decision on the case as the applicant, who had initially agreed to written submission, had requested an opportunity to speak at a hearing.

After exchanges with members of the public with the microphones off in the chamber, one resident was given the chance to make a statement on behalf of those attending.

He told the committee objectors had followed the planning process and did not believe the case should be delayed.

He said: "Earlier in the week the officers report on this application was issued and as far as we were concerned that was the line in the sand for any further discussions.

"We've turned up at the meeting today to find it has been

deferred. I am at a loss to know how that is justified. We have followed all the procedures and the rules and now it seems to have changed with no communication to us to say we are also entitled to further representation.”

The meeting heard that as the councillors had agreed to defer the case they had not visited the site yet so could not make a decision on it.

Councillor Peter Smaill, chairing the meeting, told members of the public attending the hearing: “I apologise for the disappointment.”

The appeal was against planning officers refusal to change a condition attached to the church when it was given the go ahead to be turned into a cabinetmakers that stopped it being used for other business.

The applicants said they wanted to use it as a wedding venue with a marquee in the grounds, however it received more than 40 objections along with four letters of support.

Planning officers rejected the application saying it had not been proved that the change “would not have a serious and significant adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding residential properties as a result of noise and disturbance”.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter