

Rejection of short term let home in Blackburn upheld

Plans by an Edinburgh man to operate a former council house in Blackburn as a short term let have been rejected because of the local housing crisis.

Councillors on the Local Review Body backed a planning officer's assertion that approval would be inappropriate in the midst of the council-declared housing emergency and at a time when the council has dozens of applications from homeless people a month.

The council spent millions of pounds on B&B's, temporary accommodation, and other services for the homeless in the last financial year.

Ross Watson of Craigleith View, Edinburgh, had appealed against a decision not to grant a change of use to a short term let for the house at 45 Mossdale Road in Blackburn.

An agent for Mr Watson said, in papers presented to councillors, that the short term let would encourage visitors to the county and bring economic benefits.

A planning officer told the meeting: "The submissions show that property will be available for short-term rental for 60% of the year and can accommodate up to six guests with a minimum stay of two nights and maximum of 28 nights. Booking restrictions will only allow one group of up to six individuals to stay at the property, with no overlapping

bookings.

“Cleaning and laundry services will be provided to the guests. Parking facilities are available within shared parking area, including on-street parking.”

The officer reiterated reasons for the original rejection of the application:

“The council has declared a housing emergency due to lack of affordable homes and high number of homelessness across West Lothian. Therefore, sustaining existing housing stock is considered to be crucial to resolve those matters.

“The local economic benefits of this short term let facility are not sufficient to outweigh the overall impact of the loss of the property as a permanent home.”

“It is likely that arrivals and departures of guests with their luggage and other belongings would disturb the neighbouring properties and impact on privacy, especially if those turnovers are taking place at unsociable hours.

“The noise and disturbance generated by this type of activity, including the cleaning of a property, would increase the potential for adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring properties. “

Appealing the rejection agent Thomas Cochrane said: “No neighbour objections or environmental health concerns were raised.

“The Short term let (STL’s) impact on local amenity is minimal, especially with noise-monitoring measures in place. STLs represent less than 0.4% of West Lothian’s housing stock, meaning their restriction does not meaningfully address the housing crisis.”

Mr Cochrane added: “Refusing this STL does not guarantee it would become available as a permanent home.

“The STL supports the local economy, tourism, and businesses in line with national and local planning policies. Mitigation measures, including noise monitoring [equipment], directly address amenity concerns”.

However, Councillor Danny Logue, chair of the Review Body told colleagues: “ I would move to uphold the decision of the appointed person here given that we have an ongoing housing emergency.”

Review Body members agreed.

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter