

Civic Licensing

From: Richard Caplan <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 10 October 2023 09:03
To: CDS STL
Subject: Re: Short term let licence application for the Tin Tabernacle, PH15 2JQ Ref: PK11842P

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Please accept this email as my objection to the short term let licence application for the Tin Tabernacle, PH15 2JQ

For the past 2 years the Tabernacle and its accompanying caravan, Stella, have been continuously operated as Airbnb rentals. They have been fully occupied year round throughout that period and it is extremely rare for there to be a vacancy. To put that into perspective there would be only 2 or 3 nights in the average month, if that, when the properties are not fully occupied. The owners have moved permanently to Spain and to avoid any doubt about whether this was a permanent move or not, the owners told everybody that they were moving permanently to Spain and they took their children out of education in the UK and they have now attended school in Spain for the past 2 years. The owners refer to the two rental properties as their "business" in the few communications that they have had with those of us in the village who have complained to them about the situation. The owners are now a registered Ltd company based in Edinburgh.

In addition to my concerns below, the permanent use of the Tabernacle as a short term let business will deny the opportunity of an affordable home to local people in an area that is overwhelmed by short term lets creating an inability for local people to find somewhere avoidable to live whether renting or buying.

The rentals are very expensive and the rental income from both the Tabernacle and Stella on average is not short of £500 a night. Therefore for the past two years at least, the income from the properties has been in the region of £150,000 each year. Because they are very expensive to rent, most occupants stay for no more than an average of two or maybe three nights. Therefore there are an enormous number of changeovers.

Each property has a hot tub which every guest uses. There are very few nights in the year when there are not people in the hot tubs until very late into the night. It is routine for occupants to still be in the tubs past 11 o'clock at night. This goes on all through the winter as well. Sound travels a very long way in this part of the world and even with conversations held at a normal level, literally every word can be heard in my garden. Many of the occupants play music outdoors whilst they are in the hot tub. It is very unusual for me to be able to go into my garden in the evening or at night without hearing people chatting away or playing music. Most of the visitors are very nice people and have no idea that they are causing a disturbance but there have been numerous times when the occupants have been boisterous and essentially drunk. The owners have told those of us in the village nearby that if we are concerned about any noise, to telephone them in Spain and they will then contact the occupants to tell them to be quiet. None of us in the village feel that this is our responsibility and it is a totally inappropriate way to manage the disturbance that has been created.

There is no meaningful oversight of any of the occupants. The properties have key boxes and no one is available on site to deal with any issues, all of which are managed by the occupants telephoning the owners in Spain.

The traffic increase in this extremely quiet corner of the village has increased markedly. The cleaners come in vans or cars usually two at a time. The visiting occupants arrange Amazon or supermarket deliveries and the track leading to our properties has suffered greatly. Arriving occupants have no idea how to drive safely on tracks. It is a steep track and they drive far too fast, cutting up the track. The track is used on a daily basis by people in the village, walking their dogs and there have been a number of near misses on what is a very blind and slippery corner.

The owners have recently advertised on the Aberfeldy Community Facebook page which confirms the current position. (See website reference below)

In the advert, the owners describe their venture as a “busy holiday rental business”. There is no ambiguity there. This is a business and not the occasional short term let. It is a business entirely managed from 2000 miles away with no onsite supervision at all.

The advert describes there being 25 changeovers a month. This translates to 300 changeovers a year. There are 3 cleaners and they come in 2 vehicles. That is 600 return journeys – i.e. 1200 annual uses of a poorly maintained very steep track and 1200 extra journeys on long single track roads into the village that does not have proper passing places along which children walk every day to and from the school bus which picks them up and drops them off at bottom at the main road.

It means that 300 days of the year those of us in the adjoining properties have 3 people working for up to 2 to 3 hours a day mainly outdoors as the caravan and the hot tubs and the external spaces all require cleaning at every visit. Other general maintenance is carried out and because they are outside they talk to each other all the time over a fairly long distance so often need to shout to each other. Between that and the sound of hoovers and hot tub cleaning it is like having permanent building work next door and there is no let up.

The maintenance of hot tubs is not a simple matter and there are potential issues around Legionnaire’s Disease and other health conditions. The advert indicates that the owners are content for the cleaners to have no previous experience and that “suitable training can be given”. Legionnaire’s Disease is an airborne infection and therefore neighbours can easily be infected and leaving this in the hands of a random cleaner is unacceptable.

There are literally hundreds of fairy lights and a number of bright blue solar lights on every night until after midnight that can be seen across the valley and lights up the entire view from the rear of my property.

300 changeovers a year means that, assuming a conservative 4 bedded occupancy of the 6 beds between the two properties, there is a minimum of 1000 individuals each year staying in the village with absolutely no supervision. This in a village with a current total population of about 60 people.

Dull is a historic village with roots going back for at least a millennium and probably more. Village life has not changed much in that time.

That is why people cherish living here. The whole atmosphere has changed because we now literally have over 1000 random people staying in the village each year about whom we know nothing. There is not a single homeowner in the village who is happy about any of this.

This has all happened without any planning consideration. Indeed almost everything to do with the Tin Tabernacle has been done with either no proper prospective planning consideration or made on the back of retrospective planning decisions. It was built without any planning permission at all and the Council vigorously opposed applications for conversion to residential use for over a decade until an anomaly occurred and the village boundary was extended to include the building. The development expanded rapidly, all without any planning application and permission was granted retrospectively in every case. The building is on land that is prone to flooding and is unsuitable for a domestic structure. The Council know the history of this very well. This is clearly a business and nothing to do with a homeowner making a small amount of extra income. Therefore it requires a planning process that reflects this.

The retrospective planning process for the caravan, Stella, was within the context of it being a holiday let in the garden of an occupied residential property. It was implied that this was a low impact seasonal venture with daily

oversight from the owners. The planning application was not presented as being a significant part of a business venture or that it would be unsupervised. The caravan has an adjacent roofed and permanent covered structure with built in seating area, hot tub and fire pit that encourages people to spend most of their time outside. This structure does not have planning permission. There has therefore been a fundamental and material change of use of the caravan and its surroundings and this requires additional planning consent.

Dull and Weem Community Council and the local councillors are in clear support of my and other villagers insistence that this is undoubtedly a business venture that is having a detrimental impact upon neighbouring properties and the overall atmosphere of the village and as such requires a transparent planning application.

References

Aberfeldy Community Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/551303978385712/search?q=highland%20spaces&filters=eyJycF9hdXRob3I6MC l6Intclm5hbWVcljpcImF1dGhvcmlwLWwiYXJnc1wiOlwiMTAwMDUxOTA1MjY0NjQ4XCJ9In0%3D>

Website of Highland Spaces showing the extent of the business venture.

<https://www.highlandspaces.com>

Airbnb site references

The Tabernacle

https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/40910082?source_impression_id=p3_1669227017_ipJTtm1Xct%2BGoEX

Caravan

https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/37957646?source_impression_id=p3_1669227235_Q7fqaV7obB20BCGP

Kind regards

Dr Richard Caplan

