

to nightmare 'party house'

Max Baker
maxbaker@reachpl.com

10 Oct 19

Residents in Bath have spoken out about the issue of 'nightmare' short-term lets - bemoaning noisy neighbours, blowing up genitalia and wild hot tub parties - which could drive 'real people' out of the city.

The number of short-term let properties and 'party houses' has increased dramatically in the past five years, and one man says there are around 1,500 short-term let properties in Bath.

Robin Kerr, chairman of the Federation of Bath Residents' Association, has spoken out about the problem - as well as a family who said the nuisance caused by a nearby Airbnb property is ruining their lives.

However short-term let firms like Airbnb insist they want to work in partnership with cities.

One family in the charming village of Saltford say certain types of guests are shattering the peace and quiet of the area, though.

A Saltford couple, who wish to remain anonymous because of the way their complaints have been received, say their house is now impossible to sell due to a 16-bed party house next door to them.

The female owner said: "Every weekend we get hen parties and stag dos. They are in the hot tub in the garden until 1 or 2am. "Airbnb are not bothered. It's ruining our lives, we are fed up."

They added: "We have to shut doors and windows in the height of summer. We tolerate quite a lot and have been threatened with the police when we complain. "It's not nice to be threatened. Our house is now unsellable."

"We often have to go out for the day because of the noise next door. We have no peace."

The woman's husband said he is frustrated at the lack of legislation to control short term lets.

He said: "It is extraordinary that there is no regulation in place."

"One minute it was a house, the next it was a party house."

"It's despairing, one weekend we had music and noise until half past midnight. They're not here to respect the neighbours because they don't live here."

He added: "We send a regular schedule to the council of the numbers of cars arriving and the music. "The council, I'm sure, is pulling its hair out because there is no regulation."

Mr Kerr said he sympathised with the position of people like the Saltford couple.

He believes it is a big issue for Bath and the surrounding area - that could drive real locals out of the city.

Mr Kerr said: "Short-term lets are a huge problem because there are so many of them."

"We need compulsory registration [of short-term let properties]."

"That's something the short-term let owners don't want to agree to as they want to operate under the radar."

Mr Kerr also says that houses should be made to go through a planning application when they intend to change from a permanent home to a short term let property.

He said: "We need a new use category for short-term lets [in the planning process]."

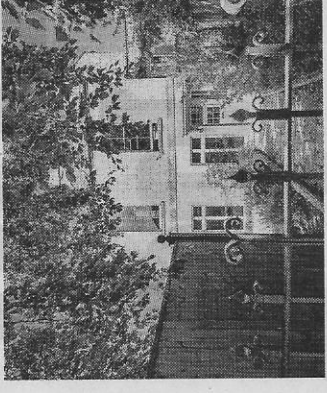
"At the moment I could convert my house into a party house tomorrow without having to ask anyone."

"I don't even have to tell my

neighbours. If there was a new use category that would change."

He added: "We want to continue to have real people living on a long term basis in central Bath, but soon there won't be any real people living here."

Mr Kerr said: "Neighbours don't complain because that complaint is registered with the council and they will then have difficulty selling their house. Two years ago, however, we at FOBRA devised an anonymous



The house in Greenway Lane in Lyncombe which was at the centre of a planning action

nuisance log which neighbours can log complaints with. This has been accepted as evidence by planners."

Action needs to be taken soon as the problems are getting worse, according to Mr Kerr.

He said there are around 71 party houses in Bath, whereas two years ago there were just 54.

Analysis of the Airbnb and HomeAway websites shows the number of short-term lets in Bath has increased from 476 in 2016 to more than 1,450 this year, according to The Times.

However, there are examples of action being taken against these nuisance short-term lets.

Back in July, one man was banned

from short-term letting in the city after noise complaints from neighbours.

David Gumbleton, owner of 3 Greenway Lane in Lyncombe (inset), had appealed against the council's original decision that the use of the property as a large commercial holiday let was unauthorised.

However, inspectors upheld Bath and North East Somerset Council's enforcement action against the owner of the unauthorised commercial holiday let which was being used as a 'party house', causing a noise nuisance to residents and impacting on road safety.

A spokesman for Airbnb said: "We want to be good partners to cities, which is why we announced plans to work together with UK towns and cities on a host registration system that is easy to follow, gives authorities the information they need to regulate home sharing effectively, and that ultimately makes communities stronger."

"Airbnb has long led the way on home sharing rules in London and these plans will enable us to extend that collaboration across the UK to cities like Bath."

Short-term let company HomeAway says it takes its responsibility towards communities seriously.

A spokeswoman for HomeAway said: "We encourage our partners to state clear house rules in their listing description, which need to be accepted by holidaymakers prior to the booking via HomeAway."

"If we are notified of a complaint against one of our holidaymakers by one of our partners or the authorities, we have processes in place to react promptly and, if need be, ban non-compliant holidaymakers."