

Edinburgh MSP wants action on planning requirements for affordable housing



Marco Biagi has joined forces with the Rector of University of Edinburgh, Peter McColl, to make a joint statement regarding linking affordable housing requirements to student housing developments.

In planning applications for large developments there is usually some condition attached that the developer has to provide affordable housing (i.e. housing which can be rented out by social landlords) either within the development in question or somewhere else in the same city in a separate development. These arrangements are quite normal and are entered into by the council routinely. But where the developments concern student housing there is no such requirement for affordable housing to be provided.

The matter was brought up at Holyrood by the City Centre MSP who believes the position requires to be changed, particularly in light of the decision by the council on Luton Court. The council refused the application for student housing there in March 2014 but this has now been overturned on appeal.

Most local politicians have expressed their dismay at the appeal decision which some believe tips the balance of students living in the Southside of the city over locals who wish to live there.

Biagi had secured a parliamentary debate yesterday evening to ensure that the challenge he had laid down to the City of Edinburgh Council was heard and debated there, but due to legal action the debate did not proceed.

The Edinburgh Reporter met with the MSP at Holyrood to talk about his campaign.

Biagi said: “The debate had to be cancelled because of a judicial review. The Parliament is not allowed to debate anything that is live in front of a court. Constituents have formally lodged a request for a judicial review of the decision at Lutton Court, so that means Parliament cannot debate it. I do hope to return to the issue at the soonest possible opportunity.

“The specific argument here relating to the Lutton Court proposal is simply that the national appeals body overruled elected local councillors. That issue will be resolved in court, but the other issue is a policy idea which I am suggesting to the council and which I have written to them about. I would like them to take the same requirement which they impose on developers of flats, which means that they would develop a certain proportion as affordable housing or fund a housing association to do that and apply that as well to student housing developers.

“They should have the same requirement to provide affordable accommodation alongside the student flats they build as anyone else has to.”

You can listen to our interview with Mr Biagi here:

[listen to 'The Edinburgh Reporter met with Marco Biagi MSP to discuss planning requirements for affordable housing' on audioBoom](#)