

Residents support Gilmerton Gateway against council opposition

Developers proposing to build shops, a hotel and business start-up units have been “overwhelmed” by the level of public support – ahead of a crunch planning hearing.

Long-established Edinburgh family business Bernard Hunter applied to Edinburgh City Council for planning permission in principle for its £25m Gilmerton Gateway business park proposals in the south of the Capital – but officials have recommended the scheme for refusal at Wednesday’s formal hearing.

In the face of this opposition the developers have received pledges of support from more than 500 residents, as well as formal letters of backing through the planning system from more than 100 residents.

Last month, the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board, which provides health and social care services, agreed to push forward plans to expand GP coverage in the south of the city due to a rapid increase of housebuilding. Bernard Hunter believes there plans would be the ideal location for the new health centre.

Mark Rafferty, managing director of Bernard Hunter, said: “As a local family firm, we have been overwhelmed by the support from the local community for our proposals.

“We’ve now had over 500 pledges of support from local resident

in addition to the 122 letters of support submitted to the council in support of our planning application. We've had cross party support from our local councillors and MP and unanimous support from the community council. Not a single objection was lodged against our proposals."

He added: "Just last week NHS Lothian announced plans to invest £10 million in a new health hub for the area. With no site readily available we think that Gilmerton Gateway is a perfect location for the proposed facility.

"The plans will also help bring tourists out of the city centre with the areas first hotel, which we will ensure works closely with local attractions like Gilmerton Cove and Craigmillar Castle.

"I am confident that this is the right development for the right reasons, and I hope we can count on the support of the council to make this landmark investment."

Edinburgh South MP Ian Murray backs the proposals, saying it will provide "multiple benefits to the community".

He said: "I know from speaking to constituents that many people are concerned about the concentration of new-build homes in the area. This development will service these new homes but also provide crucial facilities to the existing population.

"Not a single person has expressed any concern to me about this application and nobody has objected via the council's planning portal."

The proposals include more than 50 per cent of business use – with a new 60-bedroom hotel and start-up units, a new food store, neighbourhood shops and cafe. The developers also want to provide a community hall integrated with Scotland's first community archery centre.

If approved, a new transport hub and interchange will be set up to help people move easily between public transport and cycle routes.

But officials have recommended that councillors should refuse planning permission, saying the proposals will “have a significant impact” on current businesses because “it will divert retail trade from existing retailers”.

The report to councillors adds: “The development fails to complement the neighbouring planned expansion of the city and would not form a positive edge to this part of the city.

“The proposal is an inward focused retail park that does not adequately integrate with the predominantly residential areas to the north. The proposal is, in effect, an out of town retail park and is not supported in policy.”

