

Penicuik care home to become flats

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

A former care home will be converted into flats, despite concerns over the loss of green space for its neighbours.

A meeting of Midlothian Council's planning committee approved the proposals to turn the Ark Housing Association facility on Windsor Square, Penicuik, into 12 affordable flats with 20 car parking spaces.

However, concerns were raised over the inclusion of some council-owned public amenity land lying next to the care home. And it was claimed that developers had suggested children could use a nearby park which had ongoing issues with anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Debbi McCall, who called in the plans to be decided by the committee, told a virtual meeting that an architect at a public meeting to discuss the plans had been "quite vague" about how much green space would be retained when the flats were built.

She said: "It was suggested children go to Ladywood Park to play, that would involve crossing a main road.

"Just at the weekend, drugs and needles were found there; it is not somewhere I would want children to play."

Councillor McCall said that there was also concern about waste water issues at Windsor Square which had caused distressing incidents.

The care home sits in the centre of the square, which is surrounded by housing.

The council received 33 objections from 28 different households, which included concerns about the loss of the amenity area where children play, impact on parking and drainage, and the height of the flats, which will be built in three blocks of four.

Windsor Square Residents' Association also objected, raising concerns that if the amenity land were sold to Ark Housing Association for the development it could see more housing built on it.

The committee was told by Peter Arnsdorf, development manager, that the proposed development would retain 62 per cent of the open land.

Councillor Stephen Curran raised concerns about the impact of more housing on the street.

He said: "I feel there is a detrimental impact on what is more like a small community, not just a street."

And Penicuik and District Community Council objected, saying it felt the views of local residents had not been fully considered, raising concerns about parking and the loss of open space.

Planning officers recommended the committee approve the plans, saying: "On balance, the loss of a portion of the open space will not have a significant enough impact on the character and amenity of the local area to warrant refusal of the application."

Councillors voted by nine votes to four in support of the recommendation to approve the plans.

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