

Appeal over planning for Musselburgh housing development

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

Two neighbouring community councils have joined local protestors in lodging objections to plans to build 300 homes on the outskirts of Musselburgh.

Developers Barratt David Wilson (BDW) have lodged an appeal with Scottish Ministers three years after applying for planning permission in principle to build the houses at Goshen Farm, on the eastern edge of Musselburgh.

However, Musselburgh and Inveresk Community Council, and Prestonpans Community Council have both objected to the housing, pointing to traffic problems surrounding the towns, the need to protect the green belt and a lack of GP services.

Nearly 20 private objections have been lodged with the Reporter from local residents, with concerns about the impact on Musselburgh Primary Care Centre, the only GP centre in the county's biggest town, at the forefront of concerns.

The centre, which combines two practices, has nearly 30,000 patients on its book and is under pressure.

Local councillors earlier this week called for the local authority to write to NHS Lothian and Scottish Health Minister Jeane Freeman MSP to ask for a new GP surgery to be built at Wallyford, where hundreds of new houses are being built.

Appealing to the Reporter, Irene Tait, Musselburgh and Inveresk Community Council chairperson, said: "Our health service is at breaking point, and this started long before Covid-19.

"One of our GP surgeries has over 20,000 patients registered, and they struggle to answer the phone, with the result some patients give up and go straight to A&E in Edinburgh."

Mrs Tait also pointed to the pressures on rail services in the town, where the rush-hour ScotRail services have earned the nickname the "Sardine Express" due to overcrowding in recent years.

She added: "Houses are sold on the good infrastructure we have in Musselburgh. The reality is you are very lucky if you get standing room on the train in the morning and evening at rush hour, with lots of people left waiting for next arrivals. "

Brian Weddell, Prestonpans Community Council chairperson, also pointed to health services, saying: "There is no health centre in Wallyford and the existing health services are struggling to manage current service levels."

He pointed out that Goshen Farm as a housing site was removed from East Lothian Council's Local Development Plan after public consultation saw people come out against its inclusion.

Concern about losing the green belt land which lies between the two towns was raised by both community councils.

Mr Weddell said: "If this planning application is approved it will be another nail in the coffin of the green belt in East Lothian which is part of the wider Edinburgh green belt.

“Its purpose is to maintain the setting, character and identity of Edinburgh and its neighbouring settlements, and can take a number of forms, including wedges, corridors and buffers between settlements.

“It should continue to have an important role in protecting the landscape setting of Musselburgh / Inveresk and the western edges of Prestonpans and Tranent and in ensuring that residents have access to open spaces and the countryside.”

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency : funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector, and used by qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.