

Council drone plans dropped

CONCERN about council-funded drones flying over people's gardens has resulted in plans to use them being shelved.

Midlothian Council's planning boss said that calls for drone images to be used to give elected members a better idea of the impact of major developments had hit a snag when it came to invasion of privacy.

Instead, developers will be asked to provide their own eye-in-the-sky image in future applications.

A virtual meeting of the council's planning committee saw Councillor Kelly Parry ask about the progress of introducing a drone or using local drone owners to take aerial images.

She raised the matter as the committee was considering a report on a Pre Application Notice for a retail complex at New Pentland, near Straiton.

Peter Arnsdorf, planning boss, told councillors that complications had arisen around using the hi-tech equipment.

He said: "We looked at this previously and spoke to a number of local authorities who have started using drones but it got complicated by Data Protection with regards to flying over people's private properties.

"We have tried to get developers to do their own."

Councillor Russell Imrie, planning convenor, welcomed the move.

He said: "It would be very helpful with developers coming in with a large site if we could ask them to provide an aerial image."

The committee heard a report on the proposals for a site to

the south west of Straiton.

The proposals for New Pentland by Pentland Park Marine Ltd include a hotel, food retail, housing, elderly accommodation and commercial premises on the site next to Straiton, which adjoins the junction of the A701 and Pentland Road.

And developers say that the project could see more than £22million invested in it, with 145 permanent jobs created and a further 172 required during its construction.

The report from council officers gave a provisional planning view that the proposal was contrary to Midlothian Council's Local Development Plan (MLDP) with most of the site allocated as countryside and part of it allocated for a residential park home.

Planners concluded: "It is considered that the mixed-use development could compromise strategic objectives in the MLDP that require the openness and character of the countryside to be maintained and the amenity of existing park home residents to be protected."

No councillors expressed a view on the proposal and the committee noted the planners' provisional position.

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

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