

Cammo Greenbelt – decision will be determined by Scottish Ministers following midnight appeal

Plans for 500 houses to be built on protected greenbelt land in west Edinburgh will now be determined by Scottish Government ministers.

It comes after developers launched an appeal less than 24 hours before councillors were due to refuse permission.

The move was branded “disrespectful” by one councillor, who said it would have been a “slam dunk for refusal” if councillors had made the decision as originally planned.

The proposals for housing and retail units on protected land at Cammo – a site north-east of 210 Craigs Road have drawn more than 100 objections since the application was lodged in August.

West Craigs Limited & Dunedin Canmore Housing Association applied for permission to build the development.

The site is not included in the council’s Local Development Plan (LDP), which outlines the areas appropriate for building.

For months residents, community groups and councillors have vehemently campaigned against the ‘erosion’ of Edinburgh’s greenbelt – with a petition calling on the council to refuse the application gathering more than 1,000

signatures.

Concerns were also raised that local schools would not be able to handle the intake of pupils that would come with hundreds of new homes in the area.

Furthermore, it was argued a lack of amenities nearby would significantly increase car use, leading to congestion problems and reduced air quality.

Last week it appeared that objectors would win their fight to save the greenbelt as it emerged planning officers were recommending to councillors to refuse permission.

However, just minutes before midnight on Tuesday developers appealed the application for non-determination.

As more than six months have passed since plans were first submitted and no decision has been issued by the council, this means it will now be up to The Scottish Government to reject or approve.

Members of the Development Management Sub Committee were told on Wednesday that due to the last minute move, they would no longer make a decision but instead 'take a view' on the proposals, which would still form part of the council's overall response used to help inform ministers.

Despite no longer having a say, the committee pushed ahead with a scheduled hearing on the plans, which the applicant was not present for.

Cllr Kevin Lang, ward councillor for Almond where the 59-acre site is situated, said the decision to appeal was "disrespectful" to the council and "flies in the face of local, accountable decision making." He said: "I think it is highly regrettable that on the eve of this committee making a decision the applicant chose to appeal to The Scottish Government.

“It’s perhaps a sign of the confidence, which the applicant had in their case that it chose to bypass the council at something like five minutes to midnight.

“As we come to the end of this council term and looking back, I realise that this committee has often had to consider applications where the arguments are finely balanced, where there are shades of grey to consider and where a difficult judgement will have to be made on whether an application complies or not with the council’s planning policies.

“This is not the case with this application, convener. The arguments are not finely balanced, there are no shades of grey.”

Cllr Lang said if it had gone to the committee as planned it would have been “a slam-dunk case for refusal.”

If approved, he told members, it could mark “open season” for more applications to build on the West Edinburgh greenbelt.

He called the plans an “unacceptable assault on our greenbelt”, adding the proposals don’t comply with a slew of planning policies outwith those regarding development on protected land.

“It also breaches council policy on the setting of listed buildings, it breaches council policy on historic gardens and designed landscapes and it breaches council policy on transport.

“And there are very serious, grave concerns as to whether local schools, even if they are able to be expanded, would be able to deal with a development like this.”

Also present was Peter Scott, planning representative for Cramond and Barnton Community Council.

Mr Scott – a former environmental planning consultant and retired member of the Royal Town Planning Institute – said the

proposals are “clearly contrary to current and emerging planning policies.”

He added: “Our community council, 118 objectors and almost 900 petition signatories and the wider community welcome the officers’ recommendation for refusal but will be disappointed the application will not be determined by the council. “Our communities consider that enough is enough. Over 2,500 houses are being built at Cammo and Maybury resulting in the loss of valued greenbelt, landscapes and habitat, and all requiring access onto the congested Maybury Road and Barnton and Maybury junctions.”

Sonia MacDonald, planning officer for Edinburgh City Council, said: “The greenbelt is important to the setting of the city, the site has a rural, open character and is not flat but on a rising ridgeline.”

A spokesperson for Cramond and Barnton Community Council said before the meeting: “It is disappointing to hear that Edinburgh Council’s Development Meeting will not, despite planning official recommendations to reject, be making a decision today on an application to build 500 further homes on Cammo greenbelt. The delay follows the developer’s last minute appeal to The Scottish Government.”

Peter Scott added: “We object to this proposal as it adds another 500 homes to the 2500 already being built at Cammo and Maybury, further erodes greenbelt and wildlife habitat, reduces prime agricultural land, adds to the already impossible demand for school places and would expose new homeowners to odours from a nearby composting site.”



by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter

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