

Planning permission for 260 homes on heavily contaminated site

Up to 260 new homes are set to be built on a 'heavily contaminated' former coal mine on the edge of Edinburgh.

Proposals for the new residential development at Newcraighall have passed the first stage of the planning process – but concerns remain about land contamination from past coal mining on the site, known locally as the Niddrie Bing, which continued until the 1980s.

After reviewing the application lodged by E&A Partnerships, councillors supported the principle of the new development going ahead but said the applicant must undertake extensive investigations of ground conditions to identify any risks before bringing detailed plans forward for consideration.

The proposed location south of Cleikiminrig, beside Fort Kinnaird retail park, was earmarked for new housing in the council's previous local development plan.

Senior planning officer for Edinburgh Council Catriona Reece-Heal said: "Mining is an issue here because the application site is within a defined development high risk area.

"The Coal Authority considers an adequate assessment of the coal mining risks associated with the site has been carried out. However, conditions are recommended to ensure the site is safe and stable for future residential use.

“The site is heavily contaminated and it needs to be made safe for proposed end use of residential development.”

She said the developer would need to ensure at least a quarter of the homes being built are affordable in line with the council’s planning policies.

She added: “There’s also a requirement for improved pedestrian and cycle routes to link the development northwards along the Wisp to its junction with Niddrie Mains Road particularly to provide links to Castlebrae High School.”

It is anticipated the applicant will submit a full planning application once the condition of the former coal mining site has been fully investigated with proposals for how the land can be decontaminated.

Plans state: “The site is located within a highly accessible location. The indicative development proposals will maximise and improve accessibility for current and future residents of the local area in terms of pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users, public transport, and cars.

“Multi-use footpaths will be provided within the site which will offer pedestrian links through the site towards future residential areas in the south, Hunters Hall Park to the west, and Fort Kinnaird to the north. These paths will ensure the site integrates successfully with surrounding areas.”

by Donald Turvill

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