

**MIDLOTHIAN: 395 homes approved despite 163 objections and no bus service**

**Plans to build 395 new houses on the edge of a Midlothian village which does not have a single bus service have been given the green light despite 163 objections.**

Midlothian Council's planning committee approved the plans by Bellway Homes for land to the east of Auchendinny which include 98 affordable housing units.

However concerns were raised at the lack of bus services for Auchendinny with councillors calling for part of the developers' contributions to be used to ensure public transport was restored to the community.

Cllr Dianne Alexander pointed to the council's own commitment to tackling climate change as she questioned how people could be expected to use cars less when there was no alternative.

She said: "Every new development should have at least one bus service running through it.

"It should be put into the conditions that we have a bus running through Auchendinny and for future developments.

And planning convenor Russell Imrie told the meeting: "I don't think anyone will disagree we need to have these communities served with public transport.

“As soon as the Section 75 (developers’ contributions) is signed we need to get that money to a bus service to get it running through this village.”

Council leader Kelly Parry raised concerns after the report by planning officers said the local authority had decided against a primary school as part of the new housing development.

The report said: “As identified on the site plan, an area of land to the north of the site has been selected for the possible provision. Whilst the allocation refers to a school, the council has decided not to pursue this option. The lack of provision of the school therefore in this instance, does not equate to grounds for the refusal of the application.”

Cllr Parry pointed out no decision had been taken or brought to elected members to approve and she could not approve the planning application while that statement remained.

Planning chief Peter Arnsdorf said that the council had not, as yet, opted to take the land for a school but it remained available from developers.

The next paragraph in the report stated “the future use of the school site, should a school not be required, is not a matter for consideration as part of the assessment of this application”.

However Cllr Parry said the two statements contradicted each other and Cllr Imrie pointed out the inclusion of the primary school was the only reason the 395 houses were ever included in the Local Development Plan

Councillors agreed to remove the two statements from the report before approving the housing plans.

Objectors had said the housing development was too big in relation to the size of the village itself, would lead to increased traffic, needed better public transport and would

provide no safe route to school unless a new primary was included.

*by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter*

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395 homes approved despite objections