

'Speculative' developers appeal council rejection

A housing developer accused of making a 'speculative' bid to build on land in Tranent set aside for employment use is appealing to Scottish Ministers.

East Lothian councillors rejected proposals for 195 new homes on the agricultural site in Tranent after the owners claimed it was not 'commercially viable' to use it for a business development – despite sitting next to the county's second biggest employer.

At the time planning convenor and council leader Norman Hampshire said allowing more housing on land which was not already set aside for residential development in the county would 'break' the council.

And he called on the Scottish Government to give local authorities more powers to ensure land set aside for jobs in Local Development Plans was brought forward by landowners.

House developers Mactaggart and Mickel claimed the land at Windygoul, Tranent, was not 'commercially viable' adding that there was an over provision of employment land available in East Lothian.

A report to the committee from planners said the developers had said it was "highly unlikely that this site will be developed for commercial property uses".

It was suggested the location was not right and there was an excess of other sites more suitable, however at a planning committee meeting in January local ward member Cllr Lee-Anne Menzies, pointed out the county's second biggest employer

Charles River operates directly next to the site.

She asked how the site could be described as unsuitable when “our second biggest employer sits right next door.”

Planning officers recommended councillors refuse permission for the plans which would have seen 195 homes, 14 business units, a restaurant and bar built on nearly 9 hectares of agricultural land earmarked for employment use.

Officers said it was an unacceptable loss of employment land and raised concerns the developers had refused to pay a contribution towards sports facilities at the site if given the go ahead.

Cllr Hampshire said: “We are now in the situation in East Lothian where the landowners and developers who own the site we have allocated for economic development are not bringing them forward.

“They are not putting in the infrastructure in required for economic development to take place, so we have ended up with lots of green fields and no economic development.

“We need more power to be given to this council to allow us to bring these sites forward and make sure there is availability for new businesses and expanding businesses to stay within the county.

“If this application was to go through the planning system would be broken.”

The appeal has now been lodged with the Scottish Government by the developers.

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency. It is funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector (in Edinburgh that is Reach plc (the publisher behind Edinburgh Live and The Daily Record) and used by many qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover news about top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.



Artists impression of new housing plans rejected by councilors for Windygoul site in Tranent pic ELC planning portal