

Claims that council report on family park plans is “utter nonsense”

Campaigners battling plans to move a popular East Lothian family park to a new site have claimed a ‘secret’ council report on the plans is “utter nonsense”.

Plans to relocate East Links Family Park from its current home outside Dunbar to East Fortune in the county are described by the council’s economic development advisers as “supported by local business and good for food production”, campaigners say.

But they claim describing the move as a ‘relocation’ is misleading because the owners of the Dunbar site could bring a new operator in to continue the park once its current team move to the new site.

Stop the Theme Park spokesman David Johnston said East Lothian Council’s economic development officials have based their report on the new park on it having the same number of workers and visitors as the current one.

But he said: “Everyone can see that claim is nonsense. You won’t suddenly find double the number of people wanting to go to an East Lothian Theme Park. All that will happen is that neither park will thrive and the future of East Links, a key part of the area’s tourism offering, will be in doubt.”

Agents for Grant Bell who has applied for planning permission

to move the family park to East Fortune, insist the claim is not misleading and have told the council what happens to the former site is not their concern.

Bell's agents said: "East Links Family Park is the physical and intellectual property of Grant Bell, East Links Family Park is relocating, it is his brand.

"If Boots moves from North Berwick or Haddington, that shop unit won't still be called Boots. If a new business moves in to Hedderwick Hill it cannot be called East Links Family Park.

"East Links Family Park is moving – this is not misleading nor have we tried to mislead anyone at any time."

Mr Johnston said the economic development report on the move to East Fortune was not published publicly and an initial request for it to be released through Freedom of Information was turned down by the council before it was released on appeal.

He said: "Now we have got our hands on this report from economic development, we can see why they are trying to keep it under wraps.

"They say the theme park would be good for local businesses despite the two nearest and biggest businesses in the area submitting formal objections.

"They say covering fields with a theme park will boost food production which is nothing short of bizarre unless they are anticipating candy floss machines and ice cream stalls.

"The truth is two theme parks operating within six miles of each other will just carve up the visitor market leading to them both potentially failing."

An East Lothian Council spokesperson said: "The economic development consultation response was released as part of an

FOI request.

“There is no legislation that requires planning authorities to make consultation responses public, and it is therefore for each planning authority to decide whether or not to do so.

“East Lothian Council does not make consultation responses public on our Planning Portal. The planning case officer will however sometimes forward on consultation responses to the applicant. Other than this, the consultation responses will be summarised in our report of handling on the application or will be released as appropriate as a result of a Freedom of Information request.”

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

