

Councillors assured there will be a new shopping centre at Bangour

Councillors have won assurances that the building of a new shopping centre for the Bangour Village housing development will “crack on.”

The promises come a month after councillors debated and rejected shop proposals for the centre of the huge Wester Inch estate in Bathgate – 20 years after the homes were built.

The former hospital site off the A89 between Bathgate and Broxburn at Dechmont will eventually include around 1,000 homes, new builds and converted listed buildings. The developers, Ambassador Developments, applied for permission to develop the new village centre.

Bathgate Councillor Willie Boyle raised the issue of the delayed Western Inch centre. Plans were rejected by the DMC last month mainly because they featured only four shop units and more high density housing.

Planning officer Gillian Cyphus told councillors: “It’s a bit of a different situation to Wester Inch. It’s not really within walking distance or a short driving distance of anything else, so it’s critical that this goes in.”

A report to the DMC said: “The local centre is to be located at the front of the development site, where the former

hospital boiler house complex currently sits.

“It is proposed to demolish some of the listed buildings and replace them with new buildings to house shops and other community facilities, as well as a district heating plant.

“The north and west wings of the boiler house complex will be retained and redeveloped. In addition, the listed Honeysuckle Cottage will be retained and extended to form a café/restaurant.

“The existing shop, which is in a poor state of repair, is to be demolished and replaced with a community pavilion, designed to reflect the character and key features of the old shop.”

Robert Evans from Ryden, representing the Bangour developers told the Development Management Committee: “We want to crack on as quickly as possible, we should be in advance of the 200th house [being built]. It will depend upon getting market interest from operators.”

Councillors also sought and were given assurances that trees to be felled would be replaced with “heavy standard” planting that would provide instant visual presence, and that the council arborist would be actively involved in the process.

Answering questions from council leader Lawrence Fitzpatrick on the plans to fell 16 trees on the north-western part of the site, the arborist said that the trees had potentially only another 20 years of life in them. In total 36 new trees will be planted.

The plans include demolition of the boiler house complex to form three retail units totalling 569sqm, erection of seven retail units (723sqm) and a 626sqm free standing retail unit.

Along with Honeysuckle Cottage the chimney of the boiler house will be retained, something Councillor Pauline Stafford welcomed.

She told the meeting: "It's exciting that the chimney's going to be kept, because it is such a focal point."

Councillor Stafford also requested that materials from the listed building earmarked for demolition be reused where possible in the development of the new shopping centre. This was agreed as a condition of permission.

Mr Evans told the committee that , at the design stage, they wanted to be as flexible as possible because it remains unknown as to who will occupy Honeysuckle Cottage. He pointed out that the occupier might not need such a large extension as indicated.

Both planners and councillors wanted assurances that Honeysuckle Cottage would be refurbished and developed to open ahead of any new build shop units and Mrs Cyphus said: "I think it's important that the listed buildings are brought into use at the same time or before the new buildings. What we don't want to end up with is just the new buildings in place and the listed buildings not being secured."

Mrs Cyphus added: "We do need to have something around making sure that Honeysuckle Cottage is brought into use before we have an operator moving into one of the new build units. I'm happy to say 'unless otherwise agreed' .

"It's important that we have triggers to ensure that we have listed buildings either in use with or in advance."

Councillors agreed to the plans with these conditions attached.

by Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter



The Shop



Honeysuckle