

East Lothian Council gives go ahead to build fine furniture workshop

A fine furniture workshop has been given the go ahead to be built in an East Lothian woods after councillors overturned a decision by planners to reject it.

Iain Stirling was refused planning permission to build a new home for his business Chapelhill Fine Furniture on land at Bolton Muir Woods, near Gifford, after council officers ruled it had no direct link to “agriculture, horticulture, forestry, infrastructure or countryside recreation”.

But a meeting of East Lothian Council’s Local Review Body today overturned the decision as elected members welcomed the addition of the business to the community.

A graduate of the Chippendale International School of Furniture, Dr Stirling’s workshop would be near the school, on the outskirts of the village of Gifford, and maintain links with it.

His agents said it would “enable the continued development of furniture making businesses in the Gifford area, creating employment and encouraging graduates to use their skills as a catalyst to establish their own business in the vicinity whilst maintaining and exploiting the proximity to and relationships with the school”.

Concerns were raised about the proposed access to the new workshop off a quiet rural road after planners said it did not give enough visibility for traffic to safely enter and exit.

Councillor Donna Collins, review body member, told the meeting she was not comfortable with the lack of visibility but added there was unlikely to be “a whole lot of traffic’ on the rural road.

And she said: “This is going to employ ten people and help build skills, it works for me.”

Councillor Liz Allan, who chaired the meeting, gave her support as well pointing out the workshops will be close to the world-famous Chippendale International School of Furniture.

She said: “The Chippendale School is a great pride of East Lothian. I do not think the road is much of an issue.”

However Councillor Andy Forrest backed planning officers saying the concern over the access was valid.

The appeal was upheld by two votes to one.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter