

Locals object to proposed move of support centre for vulnerable women and children

Plans to move a support centre for vulnerable women and children into the home of a nursery have sparked objections from local residents.

Women's Aid East and Midlothian wants to move its staff into a central office on a residential street in Dalkeith however the move saw 16 objections from people concerned the 'business use' would affect house sales, traffic would increase and the 'sensitive nature of the clientele' was inappropriate for the area.

A report by planners recommending permission for the change of use is granted, said among objections was a suggestion an alternative site on an existing or allocated business community would be 'more appropriate'.

But officers said: "The nature of the use, which provides support for vulnerable members of the community, is considered to be best sited in a quiet, discreet residential area and not on an alternative business/industrial estate."

Their report said the building had been used for around 27 years as a business with planning permission for a childrens nursery.

They said Women's Aid had been looking for 10 years for an appropriate site to bring around 16 staff together in one place from other office locations which were no longer

suitable.

The new centre will not provide any accommodation or overnight stays and will run during the week during the day.

The planners report said: "The number of people using the facility is significantly less than the previous nursery use.

"The representations raised concerns about the negative impact on amenity, noise created and overall disturbance from the proposal. However, the proposal does not raise any significant impacts on residential amenity as compared to the building's former use. Furthermore, the use comprises internal office-based activity."

The application goes before councillors for a decision at a meeting this week.

Officers recommend approval on the grounds "The proposed use by nature of its scale of operations is less intensive than the existing use and therefore will not have a detrimental impact on the character and amenity of the surrounding area.

"The proposal seeks to re-use a vacant commercial building which is within the built-up area of Dalkeith, where there is a presumption in favour of appropriate development and is in close proximity to public transport provision and active travel connections."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter