

Plans to build holiday village of lodges on the fringe of the Pentland Hills rejected

Plans to build a holiday “village” of lodges on the fringe of the Pentland Hills have been rejected because of the density of the development.

Councillors on West Lothian Council’s Local Review Body (LRB) upheld a decision by planners over concerns that the 20 timber frame lodges in the grounds of Ormiston House, in Kirknewton would constitute substantial development in open countryside.

The latest proposals for a development had cut the original number of lodges down from 30, but planners still felt the site would look “urban”, and a councillor described it as a “small village”.

While some had no objections in principle to the plan from a tourism development point of view, there were concerns that objections in principle by national bodies such as SEPA over flooding fears had not been addressed in the paperwork presented to councillors.

The local community council had been among original objectors to the plans, known as The Paddocks, for tourist lodges. The plans were lodged by I. Crombie of Inverleith Gardens, Edinburgh in August last year but refused by a West Lothian

planning officer in January.

Following a site visit on Wednesday morning to the grazing fields on the high, open country south of East Calder, councillors on the LRB agreed with that decision.

Papers from planning officers presented to the LRB said: "The proposals for the holiday chalets would create a sense of urbanisation within a countryside setting which is currently two grazing fields.

The report said: "The chalets would result in a tightly packed development that does not retain a sense of openness provided by the existing rough pasture, nor would the development integrate well with the rural character of the area.

"The chalet park would not reflect the pattern of development in the area which is typified by a scattering of individual farms, dwellings and conversions, which display a high standard of quality in terms of design and use of materials appropriate for this historic rural setting.

"The design of the chalets to include use of materials would look out of place in the setting, harming visual amenity of the countryside setting."

Ormiston House is a B-Listed Scots Baronial house built in 1851 set in 15 acres of countryside. The site of the planned holiday lodges lies on the eastern boundary of the land surrounding the house, with access from the narrow, winding Leyden Road.

Conservative councillor Alison Adamson told the meeting later that after the site visit: "looking at the countryside setting, it would be a small village. It's not something that sits well with me".

Willie Boyle, for the SNP, said such tourism development was

quite common in the countryside: “Generally I’d be in favour of this application. It’s quite common to see these across the country and I think this setting lends itself to this potential development, and I think I’d welcome it”.

However he added: “My concern here is that I feel a flood assessment needs to be thoroughly investigated. I’m quite sure there’s potential for mitigation but that’s not what is before us [in the papers]. Given that concern I think we’d need to uphold the refusal.”

Labour Councillor Tom Conn, chairing the meeting, said: “Looking at the totality of the reasons why officers refused the plans, I’m quite happy that we move to uphold the refusal.”

The board agreed.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter