

Housebuilder appeals after shops plan is rejected

A house builder has appealed against the rejection of plans to build a village centre in the middle of a giant housing estate in Bathgate.

Wester Inch was built 20 years ago and has 2,000 homes but not a single shop.

But the new plan detailed only four shops and a takeaway, and offered more high density housing – 70 flats and 15 houses. None of which the neighbours wanted.

Persimmon Homes' plan was thrown out by West Lothian Council earlier this year. Neighbours said it would bring more traffic and destroy what little open space remains in the area.

There were more than 70 objections from Bathgate residents, as well as one from the town's community council and one from GPs concerned that facilities could not meet the new demand.

Persimmon has now appealed to the Scottish Government's Division of Environmental and Planning Appeals (DPEA). It will appoint a Reporter who will make a final decision on whether the builders can start work.

In response to the appeal West Lothian council lodged papers with the DPEA stating: "The proposal would result in a loss of formal and informal open space. Further, it would have a detrimental impact on amenity due to the increased housing density on the site, the impact on health care provision, the

lack of parking given that the parking assessment carried out was inadequate, and that the site is neither derelict nor brownfield as it has been used for many years as informal open space.”

Local SNP councillor Willie Boyle had led objections when the planning application to develop the site at Simpson Avenue and Leyland Road came before the Development Management Committee in April.

He branded Persimmon’s plan for four shops “a nonsense”. Fellow Bathgate SNP Councillor Pauline Stafford backed residents’ fears of increased traffic at the lack of public transport.

She told the meeting: “Wester Inch does have quite an oppressive feel when you drive through. It is almost a breath of fresh air when you get to this one point that is an open space.”

She added: “The transport links will be impacted. We have heard from objectors what traffic is like at school times. We do have a bus service now but we know how precarious it is because last year it was withdrawn, and it is only once an hour.

“The reality is that this is a very car dominated development as it is and to add another 85 houses I think is too much.”

Wester Inch was built on the sites of the former British Motor Corporation (BMC) lorry plant and other factories, which occupied the area until the early 1980s.

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter