

# Plans for elderly housing on hospital site set to get go ahead

A community's fight to save woodlands it calls its 'green lung' will go before East Lothian Council's planning committee next week.

Planning officers are recommending councillors approve plans for up to 145 homes for elderly residents at the site of a former hospital in Haddington.

The site was sold to the local authority by NHS Scotland after the services at Herdmanflat Hospital moved into the town's new community hospital with the understanding it would be used for older people.

However wild flowers and woodlands on the site have become a popular spot for local families who last year launched a petition calling for the publicly used land to be saved.

A petition calling for a halt to the plans to build on the land was rejected by the council's petitions committee in March this year.

The petition said: "To destroy it for the sake of a housing development is not just short-sighted, it is a betrayal of our community's love and commitment to nature and this space.

"The Herdmanflat woodland holds a special place in the hearts of the community. It is a vital green lung in the heart of

Haddington, providing a space for children to play, families to walk their dogs and people to simply connect with nature.

“It is a living reminder of the importance of preserving our environment for future generations.”

A report to next week’s planning committee says the plans for the site have been revised to take into consideration feedback from public consultations.

It proposed up to 145 housing units within existing hospital buildings and new blocks on the site as well as “open spaces including, recreational woodland, central area of open space, pétanque pitches, community garden and orchard.”

A total of 38 objections have been lodged to the application however Haddington and District Community Council has, the report said, supported the development.

It said: “The community council is supportive of the development of the Herdmanflat site. They noted that changes were made following public feedback and that the final proposals are a sympathetic development, retaining much of the open ground.

“They also acknowledged the need for supported housing for the elderly and disabled people on a site that is close to the centre of Haddington and felt that this outweighs the changes that the development will bring to the site.”

Councillors will be asked to support officers recommendations to approve the application at a meeting on Tuesday, August 20.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter