

Councillors reject car wash plan for Bathgate town centre

Councillors have rejected plans to build a car wash just two minutes from the centre of Bathgate.

Applicants had asked the Local Review Body to reconsider their proposal to establish a site on open ground next to the Simpson Hotel in the town's Whitburn Road.

However local member Willie Boyle said a new facility would add traffic to an already busy stretch of road which is lined with fast food restaurants and is only a few hundred yards from the Steelyard in the centre of town.

There are also three containers used as food vendors parked on the site.

Planners had overturned proposals put forward in March by Karen Wales of Irvine in Ayrshire when she had applied for permission for the formation of a car wash including two storage containers, boundary fencing and parking on the vacant site at 69 Whitburn, next door to what was the former Bathgate Social Work HQ.

The empty lot is just south of the town centre next to the Lidl car park. It too is currently used as an informal car park. It sits opposite McDonald's and also has three food vans at the rear of the site.

Agents for Mrs Wales said in their appeal documents that the site "benefits from substantial vehicular traffic, making it ideal for redevelopment. The development seeks to enhance the local commercial landscape by offering a convenient service

for residents and visitors while leveraging the proximity to major retailers like Lidl, Aldi, Morrison's, McDonald's, and Home Bargains, which indicates strong commercial viability."

Planners said the development would have: "a significant adverse impact on the visual amenity of the street-scape in terms of design".

They also noted that the applicants had not submitted either flood risk or drainage risk assessments.

The site already has planning consent for the building of an ice cream parlour.

Planning officers could not answer whether the food vendors had permission to be on the site but confirmed that were not affected by the car wash plans.

Councillor Boyle told the meeting: "I have concerns about the application regarding the traffic flow in this area. This is not people coming to park to use a service. This is a service for their cars so it's designed to attract vehicle movement.

"I'm not sure given the traffic flows at peak times, especially in this area, could support this and there's no traffic management study in the papers.

"There's also no consideration as to how the three fast food units will be serviced if they become part of the site as well."

He moved to support the original decision made by a planning officer to refuse the application.

Chairing the meeting, Councillor Danny Logue said he had similar concerns about the lack of detail in the appeal document including "sweeping statements" made about water and drainage. "It says 'yes there's a plan', but there's no plan. There doesn't seem to be anything concrete in the application", he added.

Councillor Tom Conn seconded councillor Boyle and added “The fact that the applicant has not not submitted a flood risk and drainage risk assessment I don’t think is helpful to the application itself because that information has not been provided. I think the appointed person’s position should be upheld.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter