

Row over church's bid to turn green space into car park

An Edinburgh church has sparked a row over plans to tarmac over grass to build a new car park.

Colinton Parish Church wants to transform a small parcel of land at the rear of the grounds to ease parking pressure when its congregation visits.

An application seeking approval to proceed with the works, which would create around 10 new spaces, is being considered by planners.

But it's been met with opposition over the 'impact on nature and biodiversity and locals' access to green space'.

Documents submitted to the council show one tree would also be cut down under the proposal "because of poor condition and a lack of future potential".

The church was contacted for comment.

Lorna Slater, Green MSP for the Lothian region, said constituents "raised this with me" and she had worked with them to lodge an objection.

"We are in a climate and nature crisis and every seemingly small application can build to have a large impact on the community's local biodiversity and access to green space," she said.

"We should be reducing car spaces and dependency on car use, not allowing planners to approve more parking."

Backing the Parish's bid, the Conservatives' councillor for Colinton said parking in the area "has been a significant issue".

Cllr Jason Rust said: "I have discussed with the church and I am fully supportive of the plans and have only received one objection.

"If approved this will be a positive step for not only the congregation, but local residents.

"Very limited space is being lost, but the wider benefit is significant."

While Daniel Milligan, who is standing for the Greens in next month's Colinton-Fairmilehead council by-election, argued green spaces "should not be tarmaced over" regardless of their size.

He said: "Wherever possible we need to retain and protect our pockets of nature – it is vital given we live in a densely populated city that everyone has access to green space. This planning proposal sets a bad example for what we need to do for our city and residents."

A decision is expected to be issued by Monday, November 11.

Plans state: "Works will proceed with care and consideration to prevent accidental damage from plant and vehicles.

"If major roots are uncovered, works will cease, the roots will be loosely covered with damp hessian, and arboricultural advice will be sought."

An arboricultural method statement would be produced before any works commenced "to prevent harm to retained trees".

Candidates currently declared for Colinton/Fairmilehead by-election on November 14:

- Scottish Labour – Sheila Gilmore
- Scottish Conservative and Unionist – Neil Cuthbert
- Independent – David Henry
- Scottish Liberal Democrats – Louise Spence
- Scottish Greens – Daniel Milligan
- Scottish National Party – Marianna Clyde

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter