

Claims housing estate sewage being emptied into village drains

An East Lothian councillor has claimed trucks full of sewage from a new housing estate are being emptied into a village's main drains system.

Bellway Homes, who are developing the site, were accused of causing anxiety among local residents after it was claimed sewage from their homes on the edge of the village of Elphinstone, was being transported out of the estate.

And local ward councillor Colin McGinn said there were claims the vehicles were discharging their loads into the village mains – and said there was some dispute over whether it had happened 'once or numerous times' as he called for a delay on a decision over allowing more homes to be built at the site.

No representative of the developer was present at the meeting to address the claims.

While it is not known who was responsible for the trucks of sewage, Cllr McGinn claimed the problem had been caused by the developer failing to resolve a long-standing issue with sewage connections to their housing development.

He was speaking as Bellway applied to begin phase two of its development at the village, near Tranent, with another 111 homes.

Councillor McGinn said problems with the first phase had not been resolved. He pointed to flooding issues, which were first reported two years ago at the site, as well as problems with sewage connections for the homes already built.

He told the meeting: "Over the past couple of months sewage has been transported from within the site to a temporary facility.

"What has also happened, and there is some contention over whether it was more than once or once, is that it has been transported into Elphinstone village itself to be disposed of down a mains which has caused loads of anxiety in the village.

"Only yesterday I had phonecalls from residents in Elphinstone to say the stench of sewage in the top half of the village is unbearable and that is new.

"Local tradesmen went up and had a look but were unable to get on site but the feedback was clear that something was amiss."

Mr McGinn took the unusual step of asking councillors due to decide the application from Bellway Homes for the new housing along with a separate application for a footpath on the site to delay hearing it until officers could investigate issues raised.

He told the meeting issues with the first phase of the development had dragged on since flooding nearly two years ago without resolution.

He added: "That the sewage and mains connection has not been resolved in phase one and we are now being asked to look at phase two is a concern."

Councillors were advised by planning officers that delaying the decision could lead to the developer appealing to Scottish Ministers to decide for them.

However Mr McGinn issued a plea to Bellway to work with locals

to resolve issues on the site rather than go down an alternative route.

He said: "I don't want to create another battlefield. I just want Bellway to be better for the people of Elphinstone and reach that co-operation which will make this phase two better than phase one."

Bellways Homes did not attend the meeting where it was unanimously agreed to delay a decision on the application to allow officers to bring back a detailed report on the issues.

NOTE TO EDITORS: RESPONSE FROM BELLWAY TO EARLIER STORY "CLAIMS HOUSING ESTATE SEWAGE BEING EMPTIED INTO VILLAGE DRAINS"

A spokesperson for Bellway denied waste was being moved off the site saying it was being emptied three times a week into a working connection on the estate.

They said: "We have been addressing concerns of the local authority and residents on the site waste solution for our site. The approved design for the site has two connection points at Elphinstone which connects to the Scottish Water drainage network.

"One of these was connected in May and June and this takes a portion of the site waste and it is working as designed. The connection of the second connection to the waste network has been delayed due to external issues in connecting the system. It is a complex piece of work which has been delayed and we intend to resume these works again in the New Year.

"As a result of the delay initially, we implemented the chamber and tanker solution. When the chamber fills we vacuum this to the other chamber on site, which discharges into the existing drainage network.

"To ensure that there are no issues we complete this exercise

three times per week and we can confirm that we don't move waste off site.

"We are currently investigating allegations of smell in the local community and will continue to work with the local authority to ensure our planning obligations are fully met."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter