

Councillors approve flats on Gorgie flood risk site

Plans to build 63 new homes on land which could be cut off by flooding in the future will be referred to Scottish Ministers after councillors voted to support the development.

Environmental agency SEPA and City of Edinburgh Council's own flooding team objected to the proposals for housing on the site off Gorgie Road, in the city.

A meeting of the council's development management sub-committee this week heard that although flood risk maps suggested the site itself would not be at high risk of flooding, it could become an 'island' in the event of the Water of Leith breaking its banks in a future flood event.

However the majority of councillors supported their planning officers' recommendation to approve the development with one adding that while new residents might face "getting their feet wet" it should not stop the use of a space which could provide much-needed housing in an already built up area.

A report to committee warned that a decision to back the application by Dundas Estates to demolish old garages and industrial units at the site behind 495 Gorgie Road, and create new blocks of flats, garages and parking spaces, would have to be sent to Scottish Ministers because of SEPA's objection.

The report said: "The site and area will have a flood risk in the future. This may result in an inability to provide safe, access and egress for residents from the development in the event of a flood.

"Residential use is supported in principle here through its City Plan housing allocation where there is an identified need for new homes. It is in an area that is increasingly residential in character.

"Having regard to the above and level of future risk of the site being flooded, there is a presumption on balance to support residential use."

Committee convenor Councillor Hal Osler said the fact the City Plan had been approved by the Scottish Government Reporter with the land included gave her confidence in approving the housing.

She said: "The City Plan was approved by the Reporter. They had the choice to take this particular space out and say it was not fit for development, they chose not to do this.

"I am comfortable this is fine for us to approve today based on the wider aspect of what it is delivering and benefits."

And fellow Councillor Joanna Mowatt backed it saying sending it to Scottish Ministers would be an opportunity for them to state their position on similar applications involving areas which could be affected by surrounding floods in the future.

She said: "I would like to see this tested" adding that refusing permission because residents might "not be able to get out if the surrounding area floods until it subsides or get wet feet" rather than allow the brownfield site to be developed did not seem the right decision.

She was backed by Councillor Amy McNeese-Meechan who said: "Given how desperate we are for housing and people needing

homes. I think we have to approve this.”

Scottish Ministers will now be notified of the councillors decision.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter