

Gamekeeper wins his fight to build a family home in the countryside

A gamekeeper has won his fight to build a family home in the countryside after councillors were told the job is an 'integral part of farming and agriculture'.

East Lothian planners refused Gary McPherson's application to build a new home to accommodate his growing family in a corner of agricultural land at Newmains, Whitekirk, because they said he did not have a link to a rural business.

But a meeting of the council's Local Review Body this week overturned the decision after one councillor defended his job saying gamekeepers were often given the 'bum's rush' by people who did not understand their role.

Councillor Donna Collins, who is a farmer herself, told the meeting: "Gamekeeping is an integral part of farming and agriculture.

"It sometimes gets a bit of a bum's rush, a lot of people think gamekeepers just go around saying 'oh let's go shoot some things and kill a stag'. It doesn't work like that, There is a lot involved in being a gamekeeper and it is deeply connected to agriculture."

She backed the appeal adding: "The fact the farmer is offering them the land shows he wants them close to the area. These

people have been an integral part of the community for a long time and want to stay there. ”

Mr McPherson and his partner currently live in a cottage across from the farm land they want to build their new home on and said that they had looked at buying a larger property locally but they were either too expensive or in the wrong location.

They said a house in an estate would not be compatible with his job which often involved unsociable hours and bringing farm vehicles such as quad bikes home.

At the Local Review Body Councillor Colin Yorkston raised concern that approving the house would ‘open the floodgates for others’ after a recent spate of similar applications.

He said: “I sympathise with the family but my concern is that if this is approved what would the implication be for others coming along. It looks a beautiful house but I won’t support it.”

However Councillor Kenny McLeod supported the appeal saying: “There are no objections and the work commitments stick with me. I take every case on its own merit and I am supporting this application.”

Review body chairperson Liz Allan agreed that each case had to be heard on its merit and welcomed the views of Councillor Collins.

She said: “We are very much a rural community in East Lothian and supporting our local families jobs that are connected to the benefit of of the countryside has a huge amount of merit.”

The board overturned the decision and granted permission for the new house by three votes to one.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter