

Community council bids to use improvement funds to provide more off street spaces

Traffic choked East Calder will soon see improvements with more parking spaces in the centre of the village.

Volunteers on the East Calder and District Community Council have won planning permission to extend the car park at the Dave King Partnership adding another 45 spaces.

But while the aim is to improve what has been branded as a “horrendous” situation in the Main Street, the plans have not been welcomed by everyone.

There were 19 objections from those who feared loss of green space in the park and storage containers used by the gala day organisers.

One objector, Nina Morrison said the problem is that activities such as football can see up to 80 vehicles arriving at the one-time to drop people off for football training sessions on the pitches.

She also called for an effective barrier to stop cars using more and more of the park’s grassed area as a temporary car park- something which happens with the area which has now been granted permission to be tarred over. There are other areas nearby in the village where those going to football could park or be dropped off- all within a five-minute walk.

Mrs Morrison said: "Parking is required, change is required but at what point do you stop using the park for more parking and allow it to be used for the services it should be, and also when will money be spent in actually improving the services in the area."

Mrs Morrison complained that the all-weather pitch had been the only new development all other play equipment was rotting and rusting, and there was not thing to attract adults to the open space

"Money needs to be spent doing the park up, not just accommodating vehicles."

Chris Davidson, the chair of the community council, told the Development Management Committee that the West Lothian Council regeneration team had suggested the community council pursue development of the car park through town centre funding.

He said "The idea was to get more parking off street because, as members are probably aware, the parking East Calder Main Street, especially during the day, is horrendous and causing traffic management problems"

Councillor Pauline Stafford asked if there were any cycle racks in the plan to encourage active travel. "We say we want to encourage active travel, but we have to do things to actually encourage it?"

Cycle racks are already part of the parking provision at the partnership centre and more could be included, the councillor was told, but they were not really well used.

Mr Davidson said: "People are not walking. A few are cycling, but not many."

Councillor Stafford said: "It does seem counter-intuitive if people come to play sport but are being driven there."

The biggest problem was people using the car parks to dump

their cars to take a bus into Edinburgh.

Mr Davidson said "What we were finding both in the partnership area and also in the existing temporary car park for the health centre, it was being used as a park and ride, people were coming in parking and jumping on the bus, and so cars would be left there all day."

The work will be funded through town centre improvement funds.

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter