

East Lothian Council leader backed by Scottish Ministers

Scottish Ministers have backed a council leader's decision to stop a family building three new homes next to their business.

East Lothian Council leader Norman Hampshire had to cast the deciding vote as planning convenor over the application after fellow councillors were split last year.

Applicant Carol Auld had argued that the new homes were needed to secure her family business on the edge of Elphinstone and pointed to more than 100 new homes built by developers Bellway on the other side of the road as further support.

However her claim that there was a need for the houses on the site were dismissed by the Scottish Government Reporter who said she saw no reason why the current situation where the family live nearby was not adequate.

And she said that despite the new Bellway estate, the site Ms Auld proposed to build on remained outside the boundary of land earmarked for housing in the area.

The Reporter said: "The appellant indicates that the family all currently live locally, possibly in Elphinstone itself. The businesses are said to be a delivery depot and a landscaping/ maintenance business.

"There is no evidence that these businesses are not operating effectively at present, with the appellant and her daughters and one of their partners living nearby.

“This indicates that siting the proposed houses next to the businesses is not essential to their management.”

Planning officers recommended refusal of the application when it went to the council’s planning committee last year but elected members were split voting five for and five against allowing it.

Councillor Hampshire’s casting vote to reject the application saw it thrown out.

At the time he said allowing the housing to go ahead would set a precedent for ‘every village’ in East Lothian.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter