

East Lothian sewage housing gets green light

More than 100 new homes delayed over sewage issues in an East Lothian village have been given the go ahead amid claims they will save the local school.

East Lothian councillors paused plans by Bellway to build the second phase of their development on the edge of Elphinstone in November after they were told some of the homes in the first phase were not linked to a mains sewer.

Instead residents saw tankers sent in twice a week to pump out a temporary container with its contents then emptied into the public drainage system.

Complaints about the smell created by the ongoing issue saw the council's planning committee call for more investigation before it would allow the second phase to progress.

And at a meeting of the committee today they approved the new plans for 103 homes after being told the developers were working with the community and council to address issues and resolve the situation.

They were also told conditions added to the new development were in place to ensure no house could be built until a mains sewer link had been established.

Bellway blamed the issues at the first phase of housing which saw 90 homes built on unexpected issues and said it was in the process of installing a temporary pumping station at the site

until a permanent connection could be installed.

At the meeting today the company's representatives admitted that 'with hindsight' things could have been done differently but said it was working with the community to ensure the second phase went ahead more smoothly.

They said a dedicated email was in place for residents of the village to get in touch with concerns and monitored by a member of staff along with plans to deliver newsletter updates and meet with a community group monthly.

Residents living next to the first phase of the development told the Local Democracy Reporting Service in November about the disruption and concerns caused by the new housing in their village.

Villagers said the smell caused by the regular sewage collection trips is unbearable at times while the noise generated by the tankers can go on for hours.

Graham Drummond, whose home backs onto the collection site, said some Mondays the visits go on all day.

He said: "After the weekend, in particular, they make several trips and can be here from 9 in the morning til late afternoon pumping out the sewage.

"It can create a smell and is noisy, it makes using our garden impossible and we are concerned it will carry in until the summer as there seems to be no solution coming forward to solve the problem."

At today's meeting Scottish Greens councillor Shona McIntosh told the committee she was astonished that people were allowed to move into the houses which had not been connected to the main sewage system in the first place.

And she said she could not support the second phase of the housing after pointing out it was nearly double the number of

homes which had been originally earmarked to be added to the small village in the council's own Local Development Plan.

However planning convenor Norman Hampshire told the committee the addition of new residents to the village through the homes would secure the future of the village school which he said was threatened without the arrival of more families into the community.

The committee approved the application for additional homes by nine votes to two with Councillor McIntosh and SNP councillor Neil Gilbert voting against it.