

Scottish Ministers back plans for housing on public park land in East Lothian

Scottish Ministers have backed plans to build an extra 150 homes on land earmarked for a public park at a huge development on the edge of Wallyford.

East Lothian councillors last year rejected a bid by developers of the site to add 150 more housing units on land which had originally been set aside for open space.

East Lothian Development Ltd (ELDL) argued that the estate provided lots of open space across the site and did not need the additional park land.

And they claimed that leaving the land undeveloped would lead to it becoming 'unloved' and attract problems with rogue quad bikers,.

However at a meeting of the council's planning committee which had backed the larger development at Wallyford over the years, elected members drew a line saying the additional housing was 'pushing it' and 'too much icing on the cake'.

Councillors who recalled the original masterplan for the site recalling it had promised the community a large public park on the land.

Local ward councillor Colin McGinn said he was concerned by the proposal saying: "One of the things constituents bring to me is the need for open space to play or walk or just be in an area not overtaken by housing. I feel this is pushing it too far."

And fellow ward member Councillor Andy Forrest said: "It will be too much icing on the cake and will spoil it."

Original plans for the overall site included proposals for just over 1,000 homes but that figure more than doubled as revised applications were submitted and approved over the years.

Planning convenor Councillor Norman Hampshire said he remembered when the original masterplan was drawn up including the public park on the site.

He said: "The ELDL original proposal to create a public park was the right proposals and the proposal with 150 houses is just wrong."

However the developers appealed to Scottish Ministers urging them to take into account the open space included across the development.

And they have now won their appeal with the council decision to refuse planning permission overturned.

However the Scottish Government Reporter included a list of more than 20 conditions including restrictions to their height and size of the homes and a ban on integral garages being included in the plans.

It also includes requirement for landscaping and open space plans to be approved before construction along with plans for 'artwork' on the site.

The Reporter said that taking into account the overall development they agreed there was more than enough open space provided for residents.

They said: "After reviewing all the evidence, I agree with the appellant that open space in the Wallyford Expansion Area would appear to exceed the minimum policy requirement. The council produces no figures to challenge this."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter