

Councillors approve new plans for a temporary homeless housing site

Councillors have approved a new site for a temporary homeless housing site in a decision which left a charity boss “delighted”.

Officers had recommended that councillors reject the application due to the new site being on green belt land.

The village, which was set up by homeless charity Social Bite and operated by Cyrenians, currently sits on land in Granton that Edinburgh Council plans to redevelop.

Josh Littlejohn, the founder of Social Bite, said: “I’m delighted and relieved. I’m grateful to all the committee for considering it so carefully and also happy with the decision, and I’m really excited to see the village in its new location.



Rendering of Social Bite\'s new Edinburgh village site



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“And we’re going to take the opportunity to upgrade it. We’re going to introduce seven of the new nest houses we’ve designed.

“It’s going to be a new and improved project with beautiful views and community growing. It’s all really exciting.

“There’s been a big weight on everyone’s shoulders involved in it for two and a half years since we’ve been trying to sort this out.

“When it was recommended for refusal initially, we were worried that might be the direction that went in and the implications it might mean. So we are really happy.”

Social Bite’s village provides temporary accommodation to

homeless people, with onsite staff from Cyrenians providing assistance for residents as they work towards moving out into permanent accommodation.

The decision comes after councillors delayed making a call on the planning permission application by several weeks, in order to hold a site visit and stage a hearing.

Scottish ministers will automatically consider the application due to its approval of development on green belt land.

Social Bite's new site sits on land to the east of the Gipsy Brae recreation area, off West Shore Road, and offers picturesque views of the Firth of Forth.

Up to 16 residents will be able to be housed at any one time in the village, with the charity building seven new temporary "nest houses" and a new resident hub on site.

A number of temporary homes at the charity's current site will also be moved.

In the village's over six years running, it has helped 120 people, with two thirds ending up in permanent accommodation after their time there.

Ewan Aitken, chief executive of homeless charity Cyrenians, said: "I'm very pleased, it's a huge step forward. I hope Scottish ministers will take the same view.

"It was great to see councillors placing a planning decision in the context of the whole city, and prioritising support of the most vulnerable."

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter