

Ninety new homes agreed for East Calder

Councillors have agreed design details for a new housing estate on the edge of East Calder almost four years after they rejected the plans.

West Lothian's Council's Development Management Committee agreed proposals by Miller Homes for 90 new homes on open fields at Hoghill Farm.

The Scottish Government's Division of Environmental and Planning Appeals (DPEA) Reporter backed plans and approved the development of the open fields in early January 2023.

The almost 20-acre site sits on open farmland north of Hoghill Farm bordering on Oakbank Road, East Calder. The initial application received more than 100 objections. These mainly concentrated on the pressure on existing infrastructure including East Calder's health centre.

Council officer Andrew Cotton told councillors that issues surrounding the medical centre, which is in a poor state of repair and now has a patient list more than double what it was built for, could not be addressed as part of the consideration of the planning application.

Miller Homes produced amended plans seeking approval in detail for 86 houses and four flats on the site.

In a report to committee planning officers said: "Planning permission in principle for the development of this site was

refused by the West Lothian Planning Committee on 16/12/21. This decision was appealed to the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) and was subsequently approved on 5/1/23.

“The principle of developing the land for residential purposes has therefore been established and it is the layout, design and compliance with technical requirements for the site which is now under consideration.

“Whilst the concerns of the objectors are noted and understood, the principle of the development cannot be reconsidered, it is the design, layout and matters specific to the development which must now be considered.”

The report added: “The proposal has been amended, in consultation with Housing Services, to reflect the council’s affordable housing requirement and now includes 3 bungalows, 14 terraced houses, 2 semi-detached and 4 cottage flats within the mix. The remainder of the mainstream housing development comprises 67 detached houses, 6 of which provide an element of ground floor living.”

The SNP’s Willie Boyle told the meeting: “This decision has been made for us by the Reporter, and we have to accept that, and we have to embrace that to make the best of the development as possible.

“We are where we are with this. The development is coming forward.”

Chairing the meeting Councillor Tony Boyle said he would like to see issues around sufficient parking for visitors addressed along with plans to widen a footpath along Oakbank Road to 3m to allow it to comply with multi use in active travel.

Miller Homes has already been in discussion with Roads officers about the extra parking and, at the meeting, representatives verbally agreed to widen the path.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter