

Anger after two oak trees removed before planning permission granted

Councillors have voiced their anger at being unable to act after 100-year-old oak trees were removed at the site of a proposed new entrance to a field before planning permission was granted.

Michael Scott, whose family own a free range egg farm in East Lothian, applied for permission to erect an agricultural building on land behind his home in Boggs Holdings, near Pencaitland, as well as creating a new entrance from the road into it.

However a meeting of East Lothian planning committee heard seven objections had been raised by local residents in the tiny community, with concerns that work appeared to have already begun on the entrance, and the loss of the trees, among those raised.



Councillor Colin McGinn, a local ward member, questioned whether permission had been needed to remove the oak trees at the site after Mr Scott told the meeting one of the trees had been brought down across the road itself during storms.

However Councillor McGinn was told there was no need for the owners of the land to seek permission before taking down the trees, which were at the space now proposed as the entrance into the field.

Mr McGinn told the committee: "I am astonished you don't need permission for this kind of tree felling and I am surprised even though you don't need permission you'd think there would be some environmental conscience before felling two 100-year-old oak trees. Just because you don't need a licence doesn't make it right. I am disappointed."

Councillor Shona McIntosh urged the council's biodiversity officers to ensure any permission for the entrance included actions to mitigate for the loss of trees on the site.

But she said: "You cannot make up for the loss of a 100-year-old tree."

Mr Scott applied for permission to put an agricultural building on land he owns behind his home and access to from the B road running past it.

Objectors said the new access would add to road safety issues on an already 'dangerous' road which saw speed reduced from 60 mph to 40mph in recent years to deal with local concerns about accidents.

Some of the objectors were concerned the new building would see hens being brought to the site because of the applicants' family business East Lothian Eggs, however they were assured the barn would be for storing equipment linked to the business and occasion 'overwintering' of some livestock but no hens.

Mr Scott said he had been unable to find land to build a home at Howden, where the business is based and had no intention of bringing any hens to the Boggs Holdings site which he said was for storage and may be used for livestock during lambing season or for 'overwintering'.

While concerns were raised about the trees being felled and work appearing to have started on the access ahead of permission being granted, the planning committee approved the application with only Councillor McGinn objecting to the plans.

.By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter